Haldeman, Mitchell Seek Reduction in Prison Sentences

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H. R. Haldeman, saying Richard M. Nixon has made a "confession of guilt" in his televised interviews, and John N. Mitchell yesterday asked that the prison sentences they are serving for the Watergate coverup conspiracy be reduced.

Mitchell's lawyers said in a petition to U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica that prison Xrays disclosed the former attorney general is suffering from a degenerative condition of his right hip which may require the joint to be surgically replaced with an artificial one.

Haldeman's attorney petitioned Sirica to reduce Haldeman's 30-month-to-8-year sentence on grounds Nixon made a "confession of guilt" in a recent televised interview with David Frost.

"Nixon admitted in a series of Frost-arranged broadcasts that he was the principal actor in the obstruction of justice," attorney John Wilson said.

Mitchell's attorney, William Hundley and Plato Cacheris, also said his confinement is having a destructive effect on Mitchell's finances and on his family, particularly on a "daughter of sensitive years."

Both Mitchell and Haldeman, once Nixon's top White House aide, were convicted Jan. 1, 1975, of perjury, conspiracy and obstruction of justice in the scandal that drove Nixon from office. The two received similar sentences.

On Haldeman's behalf, Wilson argued that Nixon "has proclaimed to the world that he ordered the destruction of tapes which would have incriminated him, but Haldeman omitted to do so.

"Nixon's statement is a clear confession of guilt and, moreover, he brags about a desire to destroy incriminating evidence and thus, for a second time, obstruct justice."

Wilson asked Sirica to reduce Haldeman's sentence to the time already served.

Hadleman began serving the sentence at the Lompoc, Calif., open prison June 21.

Mitchell's attorneys did not ask for any specific sentence reduction. Their petition said "the Watergate tragedy has had a traumatic and devastating effect on his family life."

Mitchell entered the Maxwell Air Force Base minimum security facility in Montgomery, Ala., on June 22.